

## Recognizing the Feet and Talons of North American Birds of Prey

### Part II. Distinguishing *Buteo*, *Accipiter*, and *Falco*

Most of the common and widespread North American hawks belong to one of three groups of species: the soaring hawks (genus *Buteo*), the bird-eating hawks (genus *Accipiter*), and the falcons (genus *Falco*).

These groups can be readily distinguished based on their feet and talons.

#### A. Toes elongate and slender, with middle toe much longer than others; tarsus not feathered to the base

- I. Network of small irregular "reticulate" scales on front of tarsus: *Falco*



- II. Line of plate-like "scutellate" scales on front of tarsus: *Accipiter*



#### B. Toes relatively short and stout, with middle toe not dramatically elongated; tarsus may or may not be feathered to the base; if not, plate-like scales on front of tarsus: *Buteo*

- I. Tarsus feathered to base of toes: Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) and Ferruginous Hawk (*B. regalis*)



- II. Tarsus not feathered to base of toes: all other North American *Buteo* species

